United Nations E/CN.17/1998/7/Add.7

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 February 1998

Original: English

Commission on Sustainable Development
Sixth session
20 April-1 May 1998

Progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Regional institutions and technical cooperation for the sustainable development of small island developing States*

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1	3
II.	Regional institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action	2–5	3
	A. Asia and the Pacific	2–3	3
	B. The Caribbean	4	3
	C. Africa	5	4
III.	Initiatives of regional United Nations and non-United Nations institutions to strengthen regional cooperation for the implementation of the Programme of Action	6–16	4
	A. Asia and the Pacific	6–9	4
	B. The Caribbean	10–15	5
	C. Africa	16	6

* The present report was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in accordance with arrangements agreed to by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development; it is the result of consultation and information exchange between United Nations agencies, interested government agencies and a range of other institutions and individuals.

98-02957 (E) 180298 240298

IV.	Technical cooperation activities of regional institutions	17–20	6
V.	International support for regional organizations of small island developing States	21–23	7
VI.	Constraints faced by regional institutions	24–27	7
VII.	Conclusions and recommendations	28–40	8
	A. Conclusions	28–30	8
	B. Recommendations	31–40	8
	1. National level	31–33	8
	2. Regional level	34–36	8
	3. International level	37–40	9

I. Introduction

1. The implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is explicitly based on a tripartite partnership at the national, regional and international levels. Regional cooperation is especially important for small island developing States because their limited human resources and small size make it especially important to pool those resources through regional cooperation and institutions. In addition, to avoid duplication and maximize the complementarities of development assistance projects, it is essential that effective support for regional projects be coordinated through regional bodies. Regional organizations, both within and outside the United Nations system, can play a key role in facilitating efficient and effective assistance to small island developing States and in implementing regional programmes, and the programming, administrative and implementation capacities of the regional institutions can be further improved with the support of member States and other donors.

II. Regional institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action

A. Asia and the Pacific

2. Currently, 13 small island developing States are members and seven are associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). They participate actively in the annual session of ESCAP's Special Body for Pacific Island Countries and in meetings of ESCAP legislative bodies. Several of them have hosted subregional and regional meetings on aspects of sustainable development.

3. Pacific island countries have developed a well organized structure of eight regional intergovernmental organizations, each with a particular focus funded by member contributions: the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Development Programme, the South Pacific Commission, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the South Pacific Geoscience Commission, the Tourism Commission of the South Pacific and the University of the South Pacific. In order to avoid duplication and harmonize their activities, the above organizations have established the South Pacific Organizations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC), a key function of which is to coordinate regional programmes. In 1995, an agreement was reached to establish the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which was formerly part of the South Pacific Forum as an independent intergovernmental organization providing cooperation and assistance for the protection and improvement of the environment in the South Pacific. In 1997, Governments of Pacific small island developing States signed the Waigani Convention on the prohibition of the import into the South Pacific and the control of transboundary movement and management within the South Pacific of hazardous wastes, and designated SPREP as the secretariat for the Convention.

B. The Caribbean

4. In the Caribbean, the subregional headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for the Caribbean, in collaboration with the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has served as the regional coordination mechanism for the implementation of the Programme of Action. This mechanism collaborates with a number of subregional intergovernmental organizations with a broad range of mandates ranging from specific programme areas to comprehensive sustainable development programmes, including the Caribbean Centre for Development administration, the Caribbean Conservation Association, the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, the Caribbean Environment Health Institute, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). ACS was founded in 1995 after the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States by the Caribbean States – both small island developing States and non-small island developing States – with the objective of facilitating consultation and cooperation among its 25 member States and 11 associated States and for promoting concerted action by them. Governments and civil society have begun to work closely in the implementation of environmental programmes and activities in the Caribbean region. The available information indicates that member States of some of the organizations, such as OECS, have taken increasingly greater financial responsibility for their respective environmental programmes. In the case of OECS, member States contribute some 62 per cent to the

secretariat's staff salaries and thirty per cent to administrative costs.

C. Africa

5. In Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has the mandate to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Programme of Action but has not demonstrated much engagement. Only one regional intergovernmental organization in the region – the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), whose membership includes islands in the south-western Indian Ocean – is actively engaged in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Three small island developing States are members of the IOC, whose objectives are to strengthen social economic and political links among the people of its member States and to work towards improving their quality of life through enhanced cooperation. Member States of IOC see cooperation in the subregion as an indispensable means of attaining sustainable development goals that are beyond the capacity of individual member countries.

III. Initiatives of regional United Nations and non-United Nations institutions to strengthen regional cooperation for the implementation of the Programme of Action

A. Asia and the Pacific

6. ESCAP efforts to mobilize regional cooperation for the implementation of the Programme of Action began with the convening of a ministerial conference on environment and development in 1995. The major outcomes of the conference were a ministerial declaration on environmentally sound and sustainable development, and a regional action programme for the period 1996-2000. In May 1997, a regional meeting was held to translate the regional action programme into projects. At that meeting, it was decided that some of the projects should be implemented in collaboration with subregional intergovernmental organizations. In order to promote inter-subregional cooperation, including small island developing States, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP has held three consultative meetings with the executive heads of subregional organizations since the Global Conference. At the most recent one, in 1997, a set of recommendations to strengthen inter-subregional cooperation were formulated. In September 1994, the first ministerial conference on space applications for development in the ESCAP region launched a space applications programme for sustainable development and a strategy for regional cooperation in space applications. Subsequently, in October 1995 an inter-agency subcommittee on space applications for sustainable development was established, *inter alia*, to monitor and analyse trends in space technology applications and to identify areas of complementarity.

7. In collaboration with SPREP, ESCAP has developed a mechanism for the effective monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action, consisting of a small support unit and an advisory body. The support unit consists of two cells, one at SPREP, the other at the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre (ESCAP/POC) in Vanuatu. Its functions include the maintenance of a database of sustainable development activities for use by the advisory body and to prepare reports on regional sustainable development activities for review by the Commission on Sustainable Development. The advisory body, which comprises senior government officials, advises on sectoral priorities, facilitates the monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action, and serves as liaison between the region and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. It is expected that the monitoring process will be enhanced by the Pacific sustainable development networking programme established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to link government institutes and non-governmental organizations through access to Pactok.[1] This network will be eventually linked to the Small Island Developing States Network to provide an effective means for meeting reporting and monitoring requirements at the regional level. ESCAP/POC cooperates with several non-United Nations regional intergovernmental organizations in developing subregional and national programmes and projects, and provides them with technical assistance on request.

8. SPOCC recently completed a review of the mandates of member organizations in the marine sector to ensure complementarity of programmes of member organizations and to avoid duplication. SPOCC working groups have prepared an input on regional implementation of the Programme of Action for the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and are in the process of preparing regional sector strategies for health and agriculture for submission to the special session of the General Assembly on small island developing States issues to be held in 1999. The organization is serving as a useful mechanism for coordinating donor assistance at the regional

level. Member States of the South Pacific Forum have agreed to the preparation of a regional strategy in order to provide focus for regional programming. The Forum Fisheries Agency is currently coordinating a series of multilateral consultations with distant fishing nations aimed at defining the requirements for a regional fisheries management regime.

9. The new legal status of SPREP has allowed it to provide a greater level of assistance to Pacific island countries in international environmental negotiation and improve the access of its member States to external financial resources for environmental activities. SPREP has grown in size, and now delivers a wider range of programmes; in 1991, as a measure of their commitment to sustainable development its 26 members agreed to double the total of their voluntary contributions. SPREP recently revised its action plan. The new plan for the period 1997-2000 identifies five broad priority areas: biodiversity and natural resource conservation; climate change and integrated coastal management; waste management, pollution prevention and emergencies; environmental management planning and institutional strengthening; and environmental education, information and training.

B. The Caribbean

10. In 1995, subsequent to the Global Conference ECLAC/CDCC convened a meeting of experts with a view to identifying regional priorities and establishing a mechanism for regional monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action. At that meeting, a list of priorities were drawn up subject to the approval of Governments. It was also decided that the ECLAC/CDCC and CARICOM secretariats would jointly serve as a regional coordinating mechanism on an interim basis for one year. In fulfilment of its mandate, ECLAC/CDCC has undertaken numerous activities in collaboration with a number of regional and subregional organizations as well as international organizations to coordinate the implementation of the Programme of Action in the Caribbean. By the end of November 1996, it had identified 550 ongoing or planned programmes and projects related to the Programme of Action, which have been entered in a database. Work on the database is continuing through the joint efforts of ECLAC/CDCC, the International Development Research Centre, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP. The database is available through the ECLAC/CDCC "Ambionet" home page, at:

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev

11. In November 1997, ECLAC/CDCC convened a Caribbean ministerial meeting on the Programme of Action. The meeting adopted a comprehensive set of proposals for future action to implement the Programme of Action. Implementation of the proposals is predicated on a tripartite collaborative effort between small island developing States Governments, all the Caribbean regional and subregional organizations in their respective areas of competence, and United Nations organizations. At that meeting, the mandate of the ECLAC/CDCC and CARICOM secretariats to serve jointly as a coordination mechanism was renewed. The two bodies were requested to serve as interim secretariat to an open-ended bureau until such time as a permanent mechanism for consultation and coordination is established. The meeting also decided to establish an inter-agency collaborative group comprising but not limited to the Caribbean Development Bank, UNDP, the OECS secretariat, the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the ACS secretariat, the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration, UNEP and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute, to support the interim secretariat.

12. The policy initiatives articulated by OECS call for a coordinated approach to facilitating and maximizing inputs from all development groups and social partners at both the subregional and national levels, and a careful balancing of the macroeconomic and environmental imperatives of member States. In 1995, OECS reformulated its development strategy to focus on people-centred and participatory approaches to sustainable development. The following year, with a view to enhancing coordination OECS merged its Fisheries Unit with its Natural Resources Management Unit. The merger allows OECS to present its sustainable development programmes as a single coherent unit, which makes for synergy and better coordination and has resulted in enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

13. Development of an OECS strategic portfolio and a strategic planning and management system has enabled OECS to channel donor funding to pre-identified priorities of member States, rather than simply to react to and accept donor initiatives. The OECS operational plan for 1996-2000, which includes elements of the Programme of Action, makes a strategic shift from mere conservation and environmental management to sustainable development. It accords priority to coastal resources management, fisheries management and development, watershed management and sustainable

tourism. The OECS Natural Resources Management Unit has begun the implementation of a coastal resources management initiative, and it is currently considering two other initiatives on watershed management and sustainable tourism. The operational plan has adopted the island system management methodology, which integrate different economic sectors, agencies and beneficiary groups; the Unit has developed and is presently field testing in two OECS member States the necessary mechanisms and modalities for operationalizing the methodology. OECS has noted that in its region there has been a better understanding of environmental issues but very limited understanding of sustainable development.

14. In 1996, ACS ministers approved the work programme of the organization, which was founded the previous year. The work programme includes a number of programme areas covered by the Programme of Action. ACS has recognized the need for the development of a regional tourism strategy, and to that end in 1996 it created a number of institutions: the Special Committee for Tourism, the Caribbean Council for Tourism Training and Education, and the ACS Special Fund. The Fund is expected to operate on the basis of voluntary contributions by member countries, international organizations and public and private entities.

15. OAS is currently executing a project on planning for adaptation to climate change, financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in cooperation with 11 CARICOM member countries and the University of West Indies (Barbados). OAS is also executing a regional project on disaster mitigation in the Caribbean, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project is a coordinated effort to promote the adoption of natural disaster mitigation and preparedness practices, and it provides OAS with a framework for collaboration within the Caribbean region to establish sustainable public and private-sector mechanisms for natural disaster mitigation.

C. Africa

16. IOC has put in place a regional environmental programme with a view to identifying regional environmental problems, finding solutions for them and implementing projects to cope with the problems in collaboration with all member countries. Some examples of projects under way include integrated coastal zone management, protection of biodiversity, promotion of the subregion as a tourist destination, environmental education and prevention of marine pollution from oil spills.

IV. Technical cooperation activities of regional institutions

17. A number of regional institutions have stepped up their offers to expand technical cooperation for the implementation of the Programme of Action in recent years. Information received from a number of regional institutions indicate, however, that they are still unable to meet the technical assistance needs of small island developing States in their respective regions on account of a number of constraints, which are briefly outlined in section VI below. Technical assistance provided by regional institutions serve three broad purposes: strengthening of human resources capability for natural resources management, mainly through workshops and seminars; preparation of national action plans and programmes and policy briefs for sustainable development; and execution of sustainable development projects. Some highlights of technical cooperation activities of selected regional institutions are provided below.

18. Asia and the Pacific, in the follow-up to the Global Conference ESCAP has undertaken 150 advisory and consultancy service missions at the request of small island developing States. Among other things, ESCAP is currently implementing a region-wide project, with a Pacific islands component, on integrating environmental considerations into the economic decision-making process, with the eventual goal of developing modular training materials on various aspects of best practices through national studies. It is also working on a technical cooperation among developing countries project on enhancing trade and investment linkages between Pacific island countries and other countries in the region. ESCAP/POC has undertaken a number of activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of several non-United Nations regional bodies in collaboration with them, in such areas as organizational restructuring, International Organization for Standardization standard and quality management, and adjustment and reform. ESCAP/POC has cooperated with non-United Nations regional bodies in developing subregional and national programmes and projects that fulfil the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action. Its approach to implementing programmes involves the sharing of ESCAP technical expertise with non-United Nations regional bodies and with small island developing States. SPREP has provided technical assistance for the development of national environmental management strategies in 12 Pacific small island developing States; it is currently carrying out an assessment of environmental legislation in several Pacific Island countries, in collaboration with UNEP. It is also undertaking environmental law training activities in the framework of

Capacity 21 programmes in selected islands, and has planned a workshop on environmental treaties and conventions involving all Pacific Island countries.

19. In the Caribbean, in collaboration with selected regional institutions, OAS is currently providing technical assistance for the execution of three major projects: assessment of coastal and marine problems; assessment of the current state of effluent disposal in the region; and comprehensive review of integrated coastal zone management legislative systems. An important aspect of those projects is to provide policy guidance for action. OECS is providing technical assistance to member States on request through its Natural Resources Management Unit; the technical cooperation among member States mechanism, which involves accessing expertise resident within the public sector of one member State to help another; the provision of financial resources for training; the provision of technical information on natural resource management; and the preparation of policy briefs.

20. In Africa, IOC provides technical assistance to member States through its permanent regional technical committee on environment, which is made up of high-level technical cadres from member States. The technical committee is responsible for identifying projects in member States and for formulating project proposals for consideration by IOC. It is also responsible for liaising with funding agencies to secure funding for approved projects and for executing the projects in member States. The technical committee is assisted by an ad hoc management committee for each approved project, which oversees the implementation of the project.

V. International support for regional organizations of small island developing States

21. OECS has reported that over the last five years, there has been a significant decline in aid flows to support its activities. Assistance from United Nations multilateral sources represent a small percentage of total assistance to the organization, and has also been on the decline. USAID, previously a major donor, has withdrawn from the subregion, but it is expected that it will return. Assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency has declined, and its programmes now have a regional focus, but it is expected to assist OECS in implementing a substantial programme on capacity-building for environmental management. The British Development Division in the Caribbean has committed substantial resources in support of two subregional environmental management programmes to be implemented by OECS and the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute. The European Union (EU) continues as the largest source of assistance to OECS. OAS has benefited from assistance from GEF and USAID for its sustainable development projects in the Caribbean.

22. Information obtained from SPREP indicates that international support in the Pacific for regional activities continues at adequate levels in relation to most areas of the Programme of Action. Australia and New Zealand continue to play a significant role in support of regional initiatives for sustainable development. In 1997, Canada began a second phase of its South Pacific Ocean Development Programme, which like EU programmes utilizes regional institutions and programmes for the delivery of assistance. Negotiations on a new development assistance framework between the EU and South Pacific small island developing States are expected over the next five years. SPREP also benefits from assistance provided by UNDP, the United States of America, France and Denmark.

23. IOC has observed that in the three and a half years since the Global Conference, support for its activities from the United Nations system has been nil. To date, only the EU under the Lomé IV Convention has been forthcoming with funds for projects undertaken by IOC. IOC expects that in 1998, the World Bank/GEF and the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association will help to finance a regional oil spill contingency plan project for the subregion. Prospects also exist for support from the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and UNEP in the future.

VI. Constraints faced by regional institutions

24. Information received from regional institutions indicate that the effectiveness of regional institutions generally in delivering programmes and technical assistance is undermined by a number of factors at the financial, technical, institutional and policy levels. The single most important constraints faced by most regional institutions is inadequacy of financial resources to meet immediate needs of member States. As a result, several regional institutions are unable to carry out their core functions, including international agreements, and remain overdependent on project funding. Their work programmes often reflect donor priorities rather than priorities of small island developing States.

25. Next in importance is the constraint posed by inadequacy of technically qualified manpower at the regional and subregional levels, as well as at the level of the regional institutions. This deficiency impairs the ability of the institutions to meet the demands of member States for technical assistance, and results in weak negotiating capacity in international forums, which is often reflected in small island developing States being provided with assistance that does not meet their expressed needs.

26. At the institutional level, a major constraint is the deficiency of regional mechanisms for coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Action, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean. In Africa, no regional coordination mechanism has been established. IOC, which includes elements of the Programme of Action in its work programme is not an official regional coordination mechanism; it does not comprise all African small island developing States and has very meagre financial support. In the Caribbean, jointly with the CARICOM secretariat, ECLAC/CDCC has thus far served as a coordination mechanism only on an interim and therefore insecure basis, also with meagre financial supports.

27. At the policy level, there is a lack of properly articulated policies on sustainable development, and very little or no integration of environmental dimensions in socio-economic policy planning at the national level, which makes it difficult to harmonize priorities at the regional and subregional levels, and to develop coherent and subregional programmes. Often there is considerable hesitancy on the part of national decision makers to implement recommendations of regional institutions or even decisions of regional intergovernmental bodies. In part, this is linked to the insufficiency of human and financial resources available for costly regional projects.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

28. It is clear from the foregoing that the Governments of small island developing States in the Pacific and the Caribbean have put in place a number of regional and subregional intergovernmental institutions with mandates ranging from specific areas of the Programme of Action to the entire Programme. In recent years, they have also demonstrated their commitment to regional institutions through increased financial support for some of them.

29. Regional institutions have taken a keen interest in the implementation of the Programme of Action. In the recent past, regional institutions in the Pacific and the Caribbean have also taken measures to enhance their own effectiveness and efficiency through greater inter-institutional coordination and avoidance of duplication of activities.

30. As noted in section VI above, however, regional and subregional institutions have faced a number of constraints that tend to undermine their effectiveness. The major constraints are related to insufficiency of financial and human resources to carry out core programmes. They are also hampered by the lack of firmly established regional coordination mechanisms, particularly in the Caribbean and Africa, and the inadequacy of integration of environmental dimensions in the socio-economic planning process at the national level, which makes it difficult to identify priorities for the development of coherent regional and subregional programmes.

B. Recommendations

1. National level

31. To strengthen regional cooperation it will be necessary for small island developing States to explicitly integrate environmental dimensions in the long-term policy planning process at the national level, and to identify priority areas for regional implementation in order to enable the development of coherent regional and subregional programmes.

32. In the recent past, small island developing States that are members of some regional institutions have increased their financial support for the running of those institutions. Such support needs to be further strengthened so as to make it commensurate with the needs of all regional and subregional institutions in order to raise their effectiveness.

33. In some small island developing States regions, there is a need for greater political commitment to the implementation of regional programmes.

2. Regional level

34. Efforts to strengthen coordination among regional and subregional institutions have begun in the Pacific. Such efforts are needed in all small island developing States regions. For effective coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action, there is a need to establish permanent regional coordination mechanisms and to provide them with resources commensurate with their needs.

35. Regional institutions need to make efforts to strengthen their own technical capacity in order to meet technical assistance needs of member States.

36. Regional and subregional institutions need to work more closely with national Governments to identify programmes and projects for the development of realistic regional and subregional programmes for the short and medium terms.

3. International level

37. In view of the obvious benefits to be derived from regional cooperation, the international community needs to adequately supplement the financial resources provided by member States for the support of regional institutions.

38. In order to enable regional institutions to effectively meet the technical assistance needs of member States, there is a need for the international community to assist regional institutions in building their technical capacity to levels that are commensurate with the needs of member States.

39. Although the prime responsibility for the execution of regional programmes and projects rests with small island developing States Governments, in view of the meagre resources of individual small island developing States and the high costs of regional programmes, there is an obvious need for adequate financial support from the international community for timely and effective implementation of regional programmes.

40. Relevant regional commissions and other United Nations bodies need to demonstrate a greater level of engagement in the implementation of the Programme of Action, particularly in Africa.

Notes

[1] Pactok is a low-cost electronic mail network designed to serve the non-governmental organizations movement in the Asia and Pacific region (Pac = Pacific; tok = pidgin for "talk"). for further information, contact Robert Garnsey at:

robg@pactok.peg.apc.org